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Chairman: Mr. Mohamad (Sudan)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners (continued)

(A/C.4/62/3/Add.12, Add.14, Add.22, Add.26, Add.29, Add.42, Add.45, Add.49 and Add.52)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Martín Martín (Organización del Partido de Independientes de Lanzarote) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Martín Martín** (Organización del Partido de Independientes de Lanzarote), speaking on behalf of his majority political party on the Canary island of Lanzarote and as Vice-President of the island government, and recalling past repercussions of the Western Sahara conflict on the islanders of Lanzarote, said that because of their geographical proximity to the Saharan coast, the Canary Islands needed security guarantees. They therefore welcomed the resumption of negotiations between the two parties to the Western Sahara conflict. The proposal of the Moroccan Government offered a realistic political solution by providing for autonomous executive, legislative, judicial and other institutions for the Saharan region. The Government had pledged to take the steps needed, including amending its Constitution and decreeing amnesty, to secure a negotiated agreement. Of course, other Governments that used the Saharan people as an excuse for claiming supposed rights in the matter were at the same time unfortunately pursuing destabilizing policies.

3. The situation created in the last few months offered a historic opportunity for resolving the conflict. The United Nations should become actively involved in bringing the divisions in Saharan society to an end.

4. *Mr. Martín Martín withdrew.*

5. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Romero González took a place at the petitioners' table.*

6. **Mr. Romero González**, speaking in his personal capacity as a Spanish lawyer, said that the Moroccan autonomy plan offered a real opportunity to move the parties from military confrontation to the negotiating table, and would allow two generations of refugees to return to their ancestral lands and be reunited with other Moroccan citizens under the Crown as protector

of their rights and freedoms. Surely even the pro-independence segments of the Saharan population would see the advantage of a new round of negotiations on the autonomy plan in preparation for a referendum. The broad authority given to the autonomous institutions offered a high degree of regional self-management, greater than in many federal systems in other countries; the autonomous Saharan region would control its own finances and budget and possibly even some aspects of its foreign relations.

7. The Moroccan proposal left much latitude to the parties to the negotiations and remained open to revision in accordance with Moroccan legal procedures, and to future development in keeping with the region's needs. The Saharans should not fear losing any control for they stood only to gain by participation in both regional and national institutions of power. The broad amnesty proposed by the King was also evidence of his goodwill and determination to remove obstacles to peace and true national integration. It would be a mistake for the Committee itself not to support the promising Moroccan initiative.

8. *Mr. Romero González withdrew.*

9. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Puyol García (Fundación Pilotos 4x4 sin Fronteras) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

10. **Mr. Puyol García** (Fundación Pilotos 4x4 sin Fronteras) said that he had come not to theorize on the question of Western Sahara but to speak of his personal experiences among the Saharans in the deserts of Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria. His organization travelled the world in all-terrain vehicles, delivering small shipments of humanitarian aid supplies. He himself had gone twice with supplies to the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria under the control of the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), in 2005 and 2006, and had recently crossed Morocco with a delivery to Saharans living in Nouakchott in Mauritania. He had nothing but praise for the Algerian and Moroccan authorities and police, who had unfailingly facilitated their expeditions through their territories so that the supplies could arrive safely at their final destination.

11. The Frente POLISARIO was another matter. He had later learned that the 2005 shipment of urgently needed food and medical supplies consigned to the Sahraoui Red Crescent had, with the complicity of the

Frente POLISARIO, been diverted and had never reached the Tindouf refugees or the valiant Cuban doctors staffing the camp hospital, who had been desperately waiting for the supplies. In his second attempt in 2006, the shipment had been impounded by the Frente POLISARIO for its own use. That was the first time in its history that his organization had been thus robbed. Furthermore, the Frente POLISARIO made a policy of denying visas to humanitarian expeditions from Spain — by his own group and others — wishing to bring aid to the Tindouf camps.

12. Having lived among the Saharan people in various parts of their desert, he could testify that their quality of life was best in Morocco, good in Mauritania, and very poor under the Frente POLISARIO. The Saharans he had met were unanimous in saying that they would not want to live under the leadership of a Frente POLISARIO government, but that they yearned instead to live as a people under some free and democratic system. He believed that one solution would be for Spain, as former colonial Power, to offer Spanish citizenship to all Saharans who wished it.

13. *Mr. Puyol García withdrew.*

14. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Strömdahl (Swedish Western Sahara Committee) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

15. **Ms. Strömdahl** (Swedish Western Sahara Committee) recounted the story of a Saharan student living in Morocco who had been beaten and blinded by the Moroccan police during a peaceful demonstration in favour of the Frente POLISARIO. She was a symbol of the brutal occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco and of the conditions of the Saharans captive there.

16. The people of Western Sahara were entitled to self-determination and self-government: there were three ways to achieve decolonization — free association, integration or independence — but Moroccan autonomy was no option. There was no administering Power for Western Sahara; that responsibility was in the hands of the United Nations and the Saharan people. Talks between the so-called parties to the conflict would not resolve the problem, for Morocco was an illegal occupier, not a party, and had no intention of ending its colonization. Her organization believed that the Security Council should expand and extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

(MINURSO); the Special Committee should be asked to send a visiting mission and organize the next regional seminar in Western Sahara; Spain should be asked to renew its responsibility for a just process of decolonization; and the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic should be recognized by all governments.

17. *Ms. Strömdahl withdrew.*

18. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bouh (Ex-Member, Frente POLISARIO Political Bureau) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

19. **Mr. Bouh** (Ex-Member, Frente POLISARIO Political Bureau) observed that, whereas General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) had wisely defined the limits of self-determination, the 30-year conflict in Western Sahara was due, in large part, to a selective reading of the resolution, whereby self-determination was considered synonymous with independence. In fact, it could just as easily lead to integration or autonomy.

20. Since, it had proven impossible to hold a referendum in Western Sahara, the only option left was a political solution negotiated between the parties. The Moroccan proposal for the autonomy of its southern province offered real hope, and it was a solution supported by the overwhelming majority of the Saharans through the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs, their spokesman in past and future negotiations on the destiny of the Saharan region. The high participation of Saharans in the most recent elections, despite the boycott called for by the Frente POLISARIO, was another indication of popular support for the proposal. The international community must take that into account.

21. As an ex-member of the Frente POLISARIO leadership, he could personally attest to the fact that hundreds of Moroccan Saharans had been killed or tortured in the prison of Errachid in southern Algeria and that those who had practised torture for years with impunity were currently part of the Frente POLISARIO leadership. That leadership cared more about power than about the suffering of the Saharans living in the Tindouf camps. Ex-leaders like himself were asking that international aid be sent to the camps under international supervision to prevent its diversion and sale by some Frente POLISARIO authorities, as frequently happened.

22. The only way to solve the Sahara problem was through serious negotiations leading to some form of self-governance under Moroccan sovereignty. Failure now would mean increased insecurity, contraband activities, terrorism and clandestine immigration and that would threaten the stability of the Maghreb and the southern Mediterranean.

23. *Mr. Bouh withdrew.*

24. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ebbi (Deputy, Moroccan Parliament) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

25. **Ms. Ebbi** (Deputy, Moroccan Parliament), speaking also as a member of the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs and an ex-member of the Political Bureau of the Frente POLISARIO, noted that the Advisory Council was the body that had drafted the Moroccan autonomy proposal together with various other political and civil society representatives. The initiative would give wide powers of self-government to the Saharan population within the context of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and had been hailed by the international community and the Security Council as a solid basis for renewed negotiations. Settlement of the conflict would unite the Arab Maghreb and guarantee the peace, stability, prosperity, progress and security of the peoples of the region. The proposal had been the outcome of the broad democratic developments and the expanded public freedoms in Morocco over the last few decades. Some 64 per cent of the population of the Sahara region had voted in the recent elections, and Saharans were well represented in Parliament and at the municipal government. The proposal was viable and in accordance with international law and the international community should urge the parties to the conflict to reach a settlement based on it.

26. *Ms. Ebbi withdrew.*

27. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Khayati (Association de défense de la femme sahraouie) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

28. **Ms. Khayati** (Association de défense de la femme sahraouie) regretted that, at the insistence of certain countries motivated by geostrategic and political interests, the Saharan problem remained on the Committee's agenda, even though its decolonization had taken place in 1975, with the withdrawal of Spain and reunification with Morocco.

She also deplored the concerted efforts by Algeria to obstruct Morocco's exercise of its legitimate rights, through the creation of the Frente POLISARIO and promotion of the recognition of a pseudo-republic with none of the constitutive elements of statehood.

29. Speaking also, as a former inmate of the camps, on behalf of the Saharans living in the Tindouf camps, where there had been reports of flagrant violations of human rights, including atrocities committed against women, she said that, she wondered to what extent those camps could be considered refugee camps given that the lives and dignity of their inhabitants were under constant threat.

30. She noted that the current negotiations pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) were the outcome of efforts by Morocco to find an acceptable solution to the conflict. In particular, the Moroccan autonomy proposal, which had been widely discussed by Moroccan, Saharan and foreign stakeholders and was supported by the Moroccan people, accorded extensive powers to the Saharan people, within the national sovereignty of Morocco. The Saharan people would be able democratically to manage their own affairs through their own legislature, executive and judiciary and would be granted the necessary financial resources for the development of their region. Stressing that the autonomy proposal offered a viable solution to the conflict, she urged the international community to support it.

31. *Ms. Khayati withdrew.*

32. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Morillas Gómez (Autonomous Community of Madrid) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

33. **Mr. Morillas Gómez** (Autonomous Community of Madrid) said that the problem of Western Sahara was having repercussions in: the Atlantic, the African interior and the Mediterranean. As noted by United States government and military authorities and echoed by Spain, the Maghreb had become a politically volatile and insecure region, providing a breeding ground for fundamentalism and the growth of terrorism.

34. Stressing that autonomy did not represent a viable solution and that only a free referendum on independence, as proposed in the peace plan for Western Sahara approved in Security Council resolution 1495 (2003), offered a means of resolving

the conflict, he warned that those opposing the proposal only wished to erode the notion of a separate Saharan identity and to keep Morocco languishing in poverty. Currently, Morocco's human development index value was a mere 0.631, lower than that of many other African countries. Poverty was encouraging illegal drug cultivation and growth of the dangerous phenomenon of "narco-fundamentalism". Moreover, given that 79 per cent of young Moroccans wished to emigrate, Morocco had become a centre for the industry of illegal immigration.

35. As Western Sahara remained a non-autonomous territory dependent on colonization, his community believed that funding for MINURSO should come from the revenue accruing to Morocco from its fishing and minerals operations in that territory; those mineral and fishery resources should be placed under United Nations protection. Finally, he urged that a free referendum on independence should be held.

36. *Mr. Morillas Gómez withdrew.*

37. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Plumley (United States-Western Sahara Foundation) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

38. *Ms. Plumley* (United States-Western Sahara Foundation) reviewing the history of the issue expressed regret that, more than 30 years after the 1975 ruling by the International Court of Justice that the people of Western Sahara had a right to self-determination, that ruling had still not been implemented. While the recent proposal by the Moroccan Government for a referendum on autonomy was welcome, it did not go far enough, since any referendum that did not include the option of independence failed to uphold the Saharawis' right to self-determination. Forcing the Saharawi people to accept a referendum on those terms would surely lead to conflict.

39. With regard to the close alliance between Morocco and many other countries, including the United States, which complicated efforts to solve the problem of Western Sahara, she pointed out that the issue of relations with Morocco must be kept separate from the right of the Saharawi people to determine their future and should not impede the application of international law.

40. *Ms. Plumley withdrew.*

Agenda item 36: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/62/23, chaps. VII and XII, and A/62/67)

Agenda item 37: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/62/23, chaps. V and XII)

Agenda item 38: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/62/23, chaps. VI and XII, and A/62/65)

Agenda item 39: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/62/68 and Add.1)

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*) (A/62/23 and A/62/128)

41. *Mr. Malmierca Díaz* (Cuba) noted with concern that, a mere three years before the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, many of the Organization's objectives in that area remained unfulfilled. The attempts by certain countries to cast aspersions on the decolonization cause, under the pretext of streamlining the work of the United Nations, should be soundly rebuffed.

42. The complete eradication of colonialism required the full support of the administering Powers. It was, worrying, therefore, that certain of those Powers still refused to cooperate with the Special Committee on decolonization. He hoped that the close cooperation between New Zealand and the Special Committee in dealing with Tokelau would serve as an inspiration to others.

43. Noting the importance of information programmes in the decolonization process, he said that the dispatch of visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the holding of regional seminars, such as that held in Grenada in May 2007, were among successful practices by the Special Committee in recent years. To that end, the working relationship between the Special Committee and the Department of Public Information should also be strengthened.

44. Drawing attention to the case of Puerto Rico, he recalled that earlier in the year, the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement had expressed their conviction, in the Special Committee that the question of Puerto Rico was a colonial issue and had appealed to the United States to take prompt action to enable the people of Puerto Rico fully to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. The Special Committee had again adopted a resolution on the matter by consensus. The people of Puerto Rico could count on Cuba's full support in their struggle to uphold their legitimate right to sovereignty.

45. Turning to the problem of Western Sahara, he said that it was vital that the negotiation process should continue, with a view to reaching a just, sustainable and mutually acceptable solution leading to the free self-determination of the people of Western Sahara and, in that context, he looked forward to a consensus resolution on the issue at the current session.

46. Cuba continued unreservedly to support the legitimate rights of Argentina in the Malvinas dispute and reiterated its call for a negotiated, just and definitive solution to the issue at the earliest possible juncture.

47. Reviewing the assistance rendered by Cuba, notwithstanding its own limited resources, to the Non-Self-Governing Territories through scholarships for students from those Territories, he called upon other Member States to provide similar educational and training opportunities. He also urged the specialized agencies and international institutions to support the Non-Self-Governing Territories, as called for by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2007/25.

48. **Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad** (Pakistan) regretted the lack of progress over the years in implementation of the Assembly's resolutions relating to decolonization. One encouraging development, however, had been the cooperation manifested by the Government of New Zealand in dealing with the issue of Tokelau; he hoped it would inspire other administering Powers to do likewise. It was also encouraging that consensus had been reached on a draft resolution on Western Sahara. His delegation welcomed the negotiation process taking place pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007).

49. He recalled the responsibility of the administering Powers to create conditions in the Territories that would enable their people to exercise

freely their inalienable right to self-determination. For their part, the United Nations and the specialized agencies had a particular responsibility to increase substantially their assistance to the Territories and to keep their populations fully informed of the options available to them with regard to self-determination.

50. Despite the General Assembly's repeated affirmations that colonialism in any form was incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations, the problem of the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation continued to plague the Middle East and his own region, south Asia. The denial of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people was the primary impediment to comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

51. Similarly, the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute remained at the heart of conflict in south Asia. Noting that the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir had been recognized in resolutions of the Security Council, he welcomed the improvement in bilateral relations occasioned by the peace process entered into by Pakistan and India and expressed his conviction that a peaceful settlement responding to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people would usher in a new era of mutual trust and cooperation in south Asia.

52. **Mr. Kapambwe** (Zambia), speaking also on behalf of the members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that, being themselves products of decolonization, they strongly supported the process of decolonization in Western Sahara. Accordingly, they were pleased that the negotiations called for in Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) had begun.

53. The countries of his region sympathized with the plight of the people of Western Sahara. SADC members had learned some useful lessons from their history. They had learned, that any authority built on injustice or imposed against the will of the people was bound to collapse, that there was no force strong enough to break the will of a people seeking their freedom and, that where injustice and subjugation reigned, both the oppressor and the oppressed became victims, as the prisoners of hatred, fear and retribution. Accordingly, they hoped that their own experiences might inspire Morocco and Frente POLISARIO to reach a lasting settlement that would bring peace, harmony and development to both their peoples.

54. **Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom) said that her Government, as administering Power for 10 Non-Self-Governing Territories, gave every help and encouragement to those Territories which wished to proceed to independence, where that was an option. Her Government and its overseas territories continued to work towards the shared goals of security, stability and sustainable political and economic development, democracy, good governance and the rule of law. The ninth annual meeting of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, a forum for dialogue between democratically elected Chief Ministers from the Territories and her Government, would be held in London in December.

55. Her Government carefully considered all proposals for constitutional change received from the Territories. The latter had been invited to review their constitutions and propose changes to modernize them. New constitutions had been agreed and come into force in the Turks and Caicos Islands, Gibraltar and the British Virgin Islands. In addition, negotiations were under way with representatives of Montserrat and the Cayman Islands.

56. The United Kingdom's support for the Territories focused on local capacity-building and sustainable development. The funding provided had improved governance and political and economic transparency, enhanced security, reduced vulnerability to natural and non-natural disasters, encouraged diversified development and promoted environmental management. Her Government would continue to support the Territories in their efforts to strengthen relations with the European Commission and to improve their access to the trade and development provisions of European Council Decision 2001/822/EC on the association of overseas countries and territories with the European Community.

57. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa), recalled that no regional or international organization had recognized Morocco's claims of sovereignty over Western Sahara and that Morocco's territorial claims had been rejected by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinions of 16 October 1975. He therefore welcomed the negotiations initiated between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) and hoped both parties would continue negotiating without preconditions and in good faith with a view to achieving a mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

58. As a member of the Security Council at the time the resolution was adopted, his delegation could confirm that the Council had taken note both of the proposals submitted by the Frente POLISARIO and of that submitted by Morocco; accordingly, neither party should attempt to claim that the Council preferred one over the other.

59. The Moroccan proposal on autonomy would impose a unilateral solution rather than allowing the Saharan people to hold a referendum to decide their destiny, whether independence, integration or autonomy; it could not, therefore, be said to satisfy the right to self-determination. Furthermore, it had been submitted after two years of stagnation in the peace process brought about by Morocco's rejection of the Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara (Baker Plan) which had been endorsed by the Security Council.

60. His delegation was concerned at reports of human rights atrocities committed against Saharans in the occupied territories and called on the Secretary-General to make public as soon as possible the most recent report and recommendations of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation in Western Sahara. Those human rights violations stemmed from the non-implementation of the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, as had been confirmed by the Office of the High Commissioner in the past.

61. His delegation hoped the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Morocco would resolve their differences, and reiterated its concern that Western Sahara continued to be listed as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. It therefore welcomed the submission of a consensus text for a draft resolution on the situation in Western Sahara.

62. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia) noted that the situation of some Non-Self-Governing Territories remained unresolved. The international community must show a renewed commitment to finishing the decolonization process. To that end, all administering Powers should follow the example set by New Zealand; it had cooperated most constructively with the Organization on the question of Tokelau. Until decolonization issues were entirely resolved, all Member States and United Nations bodies and agencies should continue to pursue an innovative and proactive approach adapted to each Territory.

63. All options for self-determination should be considered, for example, 'by organizing regional seminars on self-determination; in addition, awareness-raising activities for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories should be enhanced. He commended the efforts of the Organization to disseminate printed and electronic information on decolonization issues but said more could be done to ensure that those materials reached their target audience.

64. With regard to the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), he urged the parties to take advantage of the good relationship that currently existed and to resume negotiations with a view to achieving a peaceful and negotiated settlement based on the principle of territorial integrity and the best interests of the Islands' population.

65. Turning to Western Sahara, he welcomed the resumption of direct talks between the parties to the conflict in accordance with Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). All parties should act in good faith and play a constructive role with a view to achieving a lasting and mutually acceptable solution. Finally, he stressed that all Member States, as well as the Organization, had a role to play in ensuring progress towards decolonization. His delegation remained committed to that goal.

66. **Mr. Gebreel** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed disappointment at the fact that, despite universal acknowledgement that self-determination was an inalienable right, the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was about to end without noticeable progress having been made in the implementation of the plan of action. He therefore urged all administering Powers to take steps to implement the Declaration on Decolonization and related General Assembly resolutions and he further urged the States concerned to stop using the Territories under their administration for military purposes.

67. Recalling the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he said that both the Palestinian people and the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were being denied the right to self-determination because the United Nations was unable to apply international law.

68. **Mr. El-Sherbini** (Egypt), noting that the decolonization process had yet to be completed, reaffirmed the importance of implementing the right to

self-determination pursuant to Article 73 of the Charter. To that end, the Organization and all Member States must renew their commitment to the goal of decolonization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and take whatever measures were needed to assist Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination. In accordance with the spirit of General Assembly resolution 55/146, declaring the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the right of all colonial peoples to self-determination must be reaffirmed. There should be strengthened communication between the Special Committee and the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) in order to provide information about methods and options for self-determination in the Territories.

69. More visiting missions of the Special Committee should be sent to Non-Self-Governing Territories to consult with their peoples on self-determination. That would contribute to the development of a comprehensive vision for the Organization's decolonization efforts and he called on all administering Powers to cooperate fully with such missions. The administering Powers must also provide the Special Committee with all relevant information on the overall situation in the Territories they administered pursuant to relevant General Assembly resolutions and article 73 *e* of the Charter.

70. The right of colonial peoples to manage their natural resources must be reaffirmed and any misuse of those resources by the administering Power should be condemned; the cultural identity of colonial peoples should likewise be protected and preserved. Administering Powers must refrain from any activities that adversely affected the interests of the peoples of the Territories and ensure the development of those Territories based on the specific needs of each people. Closer contacts should also be encouraged between the Special Committee and the Economic and Social Council with a view to strengthening economic and social development cooperation.

71. The eradication of colonialism would require further strengthening of the principles of liberty, democracy and equality among nations and an unwavering commitment to the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination and the end of foreign occupation of their territory, without exception. His

delegation would continue to support the efforts to eradicate colonialism.

72. **Ms. Ithete** (Namibia), welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Western Sahara (A/62/128) and expressed the hope that the negotiations between the parties to that conflict initiated pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) would lead to a mutually acceptable political solution and provide for self-determination for the people of Western Sahara.

73. She expressed concern, however, at a proposed solution that would deny the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and legalize the occupation of Western Sahara. Any attempt to depart from the Baker Plan could unnecessarily prolong the suffering of the population and even lead to the resumption of hostilities. Her delegation supported all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions aimed at the holding of a free and fair referendum and urged the Government of Morocco to recognize the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination.

74. With regard to allegations of human rights violations in Western Sahara, she urged the Security Council to give MINURSO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights a mandate to monitor the human rights situation. Her delegation was also concerned about the cycle of violence in the Middle East and the suffering of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation; the Palestinian people deserved the right to an independent and sovereign State in which they could live in peace.

75. **Mr. Mokgothu** (Botswana), reaffirmed that the question of Western Sahara was an issue of decolonization and said that the people of that Territory had a fundamental right to self-determination. Any nation that denied the right of another people to freedom, justice and dignity undermined the very purposes of the United Nations.

76. He welcomed the readiness of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to enter into negotiations and commended the work of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General in that regard. The parties should approach the negotiations in a spirit of tolerance, compromise and political will to reach an agreement on a just, balanced and democratic outcome, in accordance with the wishes of the international community. His delegation's support for the

negotiations was in keeping with its strong belief in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

77. Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) called upon the parties to enter into negotiations without preconditions with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution and reaffirmed the validity of all previous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on that issue. Until such time as a political settlement was achieved, the United Nations had an obligation to ensure that the rights of the people of the Territory were protected. Whatever the people of Western Sahara decided — in a democratic process — was best for them, whether autonomy, integration or independence, their decision must be respected.

78. **Mr. Khair** (Jordan) reaffirmed his country's commitment to the right of all peoples to independence and self-determination and said that decolonization should remain one of the priorities of the United Nations.

79. Recalling that the administering Powers were required by the Charter of the United Nations to ensure the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories under their administration, he stressed that Member States should attach the same importance to the economic and social aspects of decolonization as to its political aspects. Thus the administering Powers should continue to provide the Secretary-General with economic, social and educational statistics on the Territories under their administration and make all effort to speed their economic and social development.

80. The United Nations and its specialized agencies, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), should ensure that sufficient resources were allocated to fund expansion of the programmes which assisted those Territories. In addition, those specialized agencies and programmes should support the efforts of those Territories aimed at combating drug trafficking, money-laundering and other criminal activities.

81. **Mr. Moteetee** (Lesotho) was disheartened that progress on decolonization remained slow despite the fact that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was coming to an end. He hoped that it would not be necessary to declare a third decade. The question of Western Sahara should have

been resolved long before. As far back as 1985 the Assembly had reaffirmed, in resolution 40/50, that the question of Western Sahara was a question of decolonization which remained to be completed on the basis of the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

82. His delegation was concerned by reports of violations of the human rights of the Saharan people and called on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to publish a report in that regard.

83. However, his delegation was encouraged by the start of direct negotiations between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco under the auspices of the United Nations, as called for in Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). Both parties should negotiate in good faith, with a view to realizing the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination, including to an independent State if they so wished.

84. **Mr. Gregoire** (Dominica), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that decolonization was the unfinished business of the United Nations and it was essential for Member States to muster the political will to fulfil the decolonization mandate.

85. The member States of CARICOM had always recognized that decolonization of the Caribbean Territories was an integral part of the wider regional integration process. To that end, they had granted most of those Territories associate membership in the Community. Several Territories were also members or associate members of a variety of CARICOM institutions, including the Caribbean Development Bank and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency and some also shared a currency with independent CARICOM States through the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

86. Interaction with the international community served to prepare small island territories to assume full self-government. CARICOM therefore favoured the participation of the Caribbean Territories in relevant programmes of the Economic and Social Council.

87. In order to successfully conclude the decolonization process, it was necessary to perform analytical studies on the prevailing political conditions in the Territories, as recommended in the plan of action

of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. That recommendation notwithstanding, the situation in only one Territory, Tokelau, had been reviewed thus far. In that connection, CARICOM reiterated its endorsement of the Plan of Implementation of the Decolonization Mandate 2006-2007, contained in document A/60/853, which identified action to be taken by the relevant United Nations bodies, administering Powers and other mechanisms.

88. CARICOM also reaffirmed its support for the achievement of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara and commended the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for their role in facilitating the ongoing negotiations between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco aimed at achieving a just and final settlement to the question of Western Sahara.

89. **Mr. Rewaka** (Gabon) said that his delegation remained committed to the principle of multilateralism in international relations and to the central role to be played by the United Nations. The Organization contributed greatly to the decolonization process, particularly in Africa and it must continue its efforts if the goal of the eradication of colonialism was to be reached by 2011.

90. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, he joined with other delegations in welcoming the recent Moroccan proposal for autonomy in the Sahara region as well as Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) which recognized the serious and credible efforts of Morocco and called on the parties and neighbouring countries to enter into negotiations, with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution. All Member States had an obligation to support these negotiations, which offered the best hope for resolving that long-standing conflict.

91. **Ms. Mujuma** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that Member States should redouble their efforts to complete the decolonization process and called on the administering Powers to cooperate unconditionally with the Organization in implementing the Declaration on Decolonization and the other relevant resolutions.

92. In that connection, she said that the substantive progress made by Tokelau was a positive example of commitment to self-government. She welcomed efforts to hold a second referendum on free association and hoped that its anticipated success would spur the self-determination efforts of the remaining Territories.

93. Concerning Western Sahara, she said that the logical and lasting solution to the conflict was self-determination for the Saharan people. In that connection, she hailed the start of direct negotiations between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, as called for by Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), and encouraged the parties to continue negotiating in good faith and without preconditions.

94. Recalling the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the refugee camps in Western Sahara, her delegation called for an end to human rights violations and urged all parties to cooperate in facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Right of reply

95. **Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, in response to remarks made by the representatives of Cuba and Indonesia on the issue of sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, said that the United Kingdom's position on the issue was well known and had been reiterated on 1 October 2007 by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom had no doubts about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. There could be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the islanders so wished.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.